

Department of Public Health
and Human Services

Section:
CASE MANAGEMENT

TANF CASH ASSISTANCE

Subject:
Reporting Changes

Supersedes: TANF 1501-1 (01/01/06)

Reference: ARM 37.78.102 and .507

- GENERAL RULE--All participants are required to report changes in their household circumstances as soon as possible, but within ten (10) days of **knowledge** of the change, to allow the appropriate action to be taken prior to benefit issuance. Form HCS-260A "TANF/Medicaid Change Report Form" will be provided at the initial interview, when a change is reported, at redetermination, and upon request.

NOTE: The Eligibility Case Manager will send TEAMS notice X012 "Change Report Requirements," after initial eligibility determination, at redetermination and any time a change was not reported or was not reported timely.

Participants may report changes at any time and are encouraged to report all changes even if they believe the changes are insignificant.

- **The participant may report changes to either the WoRC Case Manager or the Eligibility Case Manager.** Reporting to the WoRC Case Manager is considered a report to the Eligibility Case Manager and fulfills the participant's requirement to report the change.

- **If the participant reports a change to the WoRC Case Manager, the WoRC Case Manager must immediately report the change to the Eligibility Case Manager.** The Eligibility Case Manager will evaluate the changes and apply the information appropriately as eligibility is redetermined.

If changes are not reported or are not reported timely, correct benefits may be delayed or the assistance unit may be required to repay benefits issued incorrectly.

All reported/discovered changes must be treated as if made timely (within ten days of knowledge of the change). Allow ten days for worker action and ten days for notice of adverse action to establish which benefit months were possibly overpaid. (TANF1504-1)

EXAMPLE: An increase in income known March 15, but not reported until April 30, may result in the May TANF benefits being issued when the individual/family isn't eligible.

ACTION: An overpayment is calculated for May. The 10-day reporting time period ends March 25. The Eligibility Case Manager had 10 days to act and there aren't ten days remaining in the administrative month (March) in which to provide timely notice to the participant reducing April's benefits. Therefore, April's TANF assistance is released. No overpayment is calculated for April.

**WHO IS
REQUIRED TO
REPORT?**

All filing/assistance units, eligible for and/or receiving public assistance benefits, are required to report changes in household circumstances and provide verification of the change(s).

**WHAT IS TO BE
REPORTED?**

The following circumstances must be reported as soon as possible but within ten (10) days of knowledge of the change to assure benefits are issued promptly and correctly:

NOTE: Changes may be reported throughout the entire administrative month.

1. Changes in income source or in the amount of gross monthly income;

Examples of income changes include but are not limited to the following:

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 - 1) changes in hours worked or pay per hour/pay period;
 - 2) promotion or demotion;
 - 3) an additional job;
 - 4) a different job;
 - 5) lump sum payments such as lottery winnings, settlements;
 - 6) vendor payments for childcare assistance;
 - 7) disability/death benefits;
 - ▶ 8) child support payments (received or paid out).

2. Changes in household members;
3. Changes in residence and the resulting changes in living arrangements; and
4. Changes in resources.

► **METHODS OF REPORTING CHANGES**

Participants can report changes by:

1. completing, signing and returning the Change Report Form (HCS-260A) to either the OPA **or WoRC** Office;

► **NOTE:** Participants **cannot** be required to report changes on Form HCS-260A.

► 2. telephoning or writing the county OPA **or WoRC** Office;

► 3. writing or telephoning the Eligibility Case Manager or **WoRC Case Manager** directly, or

► 4. reporting the change to either the OPA **or WoRC** Office in person.

► **NOTE:** County office staff may also discover information from sources such as newspapers, anonymous calls/letters, R & R Agencies, SEARCHS, MISTICS, PJUSTICE, etc. When information is discovered, the participant must be given the opportunity to respond before action is taken. The Eligibility Case Manager will send a TEAMS Notice notifying the participant of the discovered information and requesting verification to substantiate or dispute it.

The Eligibility Case Manager will evaluate the effect the change may have on all eligibility requirements, non financial as well as financial. For example, if the individual reports an increase in income due to an increase in work hours, this change may also affect the dependent care expense amount, the employment hours on the EAIN screen and FIA/EP participation hours.

ACTING ON REPORTED, DISCOVERED CHANGES

The Eligibility Case Manager must take an action on all changes reported to, or discovered by the agency, within ten days of the reported/discovered change, regardless of the timeliness of the report.

To take an action on changes reported/discovered can mean any or all of the following actions:

1. redetermining eligibility,
2. requesting verification and/or more information,
3. recalculating benefits,
4. taking adverse action (reduction or termination of benefits),
5. establishing an overpayment,
6. issuing a supplement, OR

7. simply documenting in TEAMS case notes (CANO) that a change was reported/discovered, evaluated, and no further action was required.

Action must be taken promptly and must occur even if TEAMS processing time frames prevent a correction to benefits prior to actual issuance.

TEAMS issuance (cutoff) occurs at 5:30 p.m. on the fourth working day from the last calendar day of the month. Any action taken on an authorized case after TEAMS Cutoff will not reflect on eligibility or payment amount for the next benefit month.

NOTE: Supplements are issued for all changes reported within the administrative month (month prior to the benefit month) upon timely receipt of verification.

VERIFICATION OF THE CHANGE

When a participant reports a change, verification (document or statement from a collateral contact) of that change must be obtained as soon as possible. Specific time periods are stated later in this section according to the outcome of the redetermination of eligibility and/or benefit. If verification is not submitted with the reported change or information is discovered, the participant is informed (via a TEAMS Notice) that they must provide the necessary verification within ten (10) days of the notice date. Staff must always follow up verbal requests with a TEAMS notice.

NOTE: The 'request for information notice' cannot be used as a notice of adverse action. If the participant does not respond to the notice and eligibility cannot be determined without that information, a timely notice of the adverse action must be sent (TANF 1503-1).

► ADDING A HOUSEHOLD MEMBER

If the household reports that an individual who is a required filing unit member has entered the household, eligibility for the entire household must be redetermined. (TANF 201-3)



If the new household member is an adult, the household is required to complete an HCS-261A "Adding a New Household Member" form. This form states the information provided may result in termination or reduction of benefits without ten days notice. (TANF 201-3)



If the new household member is required to negotiate, sign and comply with a Family Investment Agreement/Employability Plan (FIA/EP), further benefits cannot be issued until this eligibility requirement is met. (TANF 701-1, 701-2).

► **NOTE:** If the addition of the new household member requires changing the number of hours that another household member is assigned to WoRC, the Eligibility Case Manager must enter an END DATE for the existing WRC component and enter a new component beginning the first of the next month.

► **Example:** Household received TANF benefits as a single parent household in August. On August 24, Mom reports on a signed change report form that Dad has moved back into the household. Since Dad is an adult, Mom is also required to complete the HCS-261A "Adding a New Household Member" form. Dad is required to negotiate a FIA/EP for September and the household would be required to participate the higher number of hours for September.

If Dad negotiates a FIA/EP by August 31, benefits will be issued to the household. If Dad fails to negotiate a FIA/EP by August 31, the case is closed with adequate notice.

USING CASE NOTES

Always use TEAMS Case Notes (CANO) to explain the reported/discovered change and the action taken as a result of the report (even when no action is necessary). (TANF 1507-1)
Documentation should include:

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1. a description of the change,
 2. dates the change occurred,
 3. date the change was reported/discovered,
 4. the verification provided and/or requested,
 5. how the change was reported/discovered (by phone, HCS-260A, written note, in person or a third party), and
 6. any other pertinent information.

EXAMPLE: On April 3, the participant submits pay stubs for wages received in March. The wages do not vary from what is currently being used. No change in eligibility or benefits is necessary.

ACTION: The Eligibility Case Manager should complete a TEAMS case note saying, 'Participant reported wages on April 3 and included pay stubs for March. This information did not reflect a change to the current prospected monthly income. No change in eligibility or benefits necessary.'

**NOTICES ON
ACTION TAKEN**

When a change that will result in an adverse action is reported on a signed Change Report and enough information to determine ongoing eligibility is provided, the Eligibility Case Manager will use **adequate** notice to inform the participant of the action (TANF 1503-1). Adequate notice is sufficient because the signed Change Report Form notifies the participant of possible consequences.



When a change which results in an adverse action is reported by any means other than a signed change report form **OR** there is not enough information on the signed Change Report to accurately determine ongoing eligibility (e.g, verification/information must be requested), the Eligibility Case Manager must send a **timely** notice. (TANF 1503-1)

**CHANGES
CAUSING
INCREASED
BENEFITS**

WITHOUT VERIFICATION: When a reported/discovered change will result in increased benefits, **but does not include necessary verification**, request verification to be provided within ten days of the TEAMS Notice. If the verification is not received prior to TEAMS issuance (cutoff) or the ten-day period extends into the next benefit month, benefits are authorized at the benefit amount previously issued. **Do not increase benefits prior to receipt of verification.**

Within ten days of receipt of verification, redetermine eligibility and benefit amount and issue supplemental benefits. Send appropriate TEAMS notice of the action taken. Document TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

If requested verification is not received within the stated time period or the administrative month and correct eligibility and benefit amount cannot be determined without it, benefits are terminated with timely notice . If the verification is received after the time period but within the administrative month and timely notice cannot be provided, benefits are issued at the previous level. No overpayment is calculated. Circumstances and an explanation of why benefits were issued must be documented in TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

WITH VERIFICATION: When a reported change includes verification, the redetermination of eligibility and benefits should be completed within ten days. If the action cannot be made prior to TEAMS issuance (cutoff), release the benefit in the same amount previously issued and issue a supplement no later than the 10th of the benefit month. Send appropriate notice. Document TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

EXAMPLE: Linda Lou, a TANF cash assistance participant reports by phone on April 5, that she lost her job and her last paycheck will be received on April 10. She also reports she will receive \$52 per week from unemployment benefits. After a brief evaluation of the circumstances, the Eligibility Case Manager determines this change will result in an increase in benefits payment.

- ACTION:**
1. Budget the monthly unemployment benefits.
 2. Evaluate for a possible change in childcare expense, child support paid to an individual out of the home, and employment hours,
 3. Remove wage data from the EAIN screen.
 4. Remove/change the childcare expense on the EXPE screen; notify the WoRC Case Manager of the job loss. The WoRC Case Manager will notify the Resource and Referral Agency of the change in child care needs.
 5. Set an ALERT for the next administrative month to access MISTICS for unemployment information.
 6. Request verification of job end, last paycheck and unemployment benefits. Enter 'CS' in the verification field and due date on ETAL.
 7. **Upon receipt of verification**, redetermine eligibility and benefit amount.
 8. Renegotiate a new FIA/EP
 9. Send appropriate TEAMS Notice.
 10. Document action taken in TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

NOTE: April's benefit payments are not adjusted.

EXAMPLE: Maryann Elizabeth, an MA-PS and Food Stamp Program participant, reports on April 10, using Form HCS-260A, her husband broke his leg April 2, and will not be able to work for three months. The family does not expect any income for the rest of April or the next few months. After a brief review of the case, the Eligibility Case Manager determines the change may result in an application for cash assistance, an increase in their Food Stamp allotment and potential MA-FM eligibility for Maryann Elizabeth and her husband.

- ACTION:**
1. Send TEAMS Notice X013, requesting verification of employment status, the temporary disability, any change to child care expenses, and provide

information about MA-FM and TANF Cash; set verification due date on ETAL.

NOTE: The verification request notice must clearly state which information is needed for each program.

2. **Upon receipt of the verification**, redetermine eligibility and benefits based on zero income.
3. Immediately deauthorize the case if Maryann Elizabeth applies for TANF Cash and set an appointment for Maryann Elizabeth and her husband to negotiate their FIA/EP. MA-FM should be processed immediately, and not wait for the FIA/EP appointment.
4. Send adequate notice of action taken. Document TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

NOTE: Do not supplement April's benefit amounts.



EXAMPLE: Leonardo, a TANF cash assistance and Food Stamp Program participant, submits a signed Change Report form (HCS-260A) on April 27, stating his hours have been cut from 40 hours per week to 15 hours per week. After a brief review of the case, the Eligibility Case Manager determines there will be an increase in benefit amounts.

- ACTION:**
1. Request verification of employment hours and childcare expense. Enter CS code in verification field on EAIN and a due date on ETAL. If verification is not received prior to TEAMS Cutoff, issue May benefits at the previous month's amount.
 2. If the verification is received after TEAMS Cutoff, but within the administrative month or the ten-day reporting period extended into May, supplement May benefits.
 3. Send adequate notice.
 4. Document action taken in TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

CHANGES CAUSING DECREASED BENEFITS

WITHOUT VERIFICATION: When a reported change, without verification, results in a benefit decrease, benefits are issued if the information alone is sufficient to prospectively determine ongoing eligibility and/or benefits. A TEAMS notice must be sent requesting the verification to be provided within 10 days. Prior to issuing the second

month's benefits (the month following the month after the reported/discovered change), verification must be received.

NOTE: If the change is reported/discovered in April, the second month is June

If the verification is not received for the second benefit month, eligibility ends. **Timely** Notice must be sent. Document action taken in TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

If the verification is received prior to release of the second month's benefit, redetermine eligibility and/or benefit amount and continue issuance of the adjusted benefits. Document action in TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

EXAMPLE #1: Dwight, a TANF cash assistance and Food Stamp program participant, calls on April 22 to report he found a job. He will be working full-time (40 hours/week) and earning \$13.00 per hour. The Eligibility Case Manager briefly reviews the case and determines the change will result in decreased TANF benefits.

ACTION:

1. Ask Dwight how often he will be paid, the pay dates, and if the job is expected to continue.
2. Request verification of employment, pay, etc. Enter CS code in the verification field on EAIN and due date on ETAL.
3. Redetermine eligibility and benefit amount. It is determined that prospectively the case fails the GMI for household size. Allow May benefits to be issued because it is not possible to send timely notice of the termination of eligibility and/or benefits. **Do not determine an overpayment.**
4. Close the TANF cash assistance case effective May 31, enter WPR code in the Work Support Payment field on AFED and approve the WSP if appropriate. Send timely notice.
5. Complete TEAMS case notes on the CANO screen.

EXAMPLE #2: Heather JoLynne, a TANF cash assistance and Food Stamp Program participant, submits a signed Change Report Form on April 10. She reports she was awarded disability payments of \$950 per month beginning May 1st. The Eligibility Case Manager briefly reviews the case and determines the change will result in decreased benefit amount and possibly termination of eligibility.

ACTION:

- ▶ 1. Redetermine eligibility prospecting the disability income for TANF cash assistance and Food Stamps coded on the UNIN screen. If eligible, authorize benefits; if ineligible, close the TANF cash assistance case. In either case, the changes to the TANF cash assistance will also impact Food Stamps.
- 2. Request income verification. Enter CS in the verification field on UNIN and due date on ETAL.
- 3. Send adequate notice explaining the action taken.
- 4. Document action taken in TEAMS Case Notes (CANO).

EXAMPLE #3: Zelda Emelda, a TANF cash assistance and Food Stamp Program participant, called on April 5 to say she started working March 1 and received her first pay on March 15.

ACTION:

- ▶ 1. Redetermine eligibility for the May benefit month, enter the income on the EAIN screen; benefits will decrease.
- 2. Send timely notice of adverse action.
- 3. Request verification of new job. Enter CS in the verification field on the EAIN screen and due date on ETAL.
- ▶ 4. Upon receipt of verification, establish a TANF overpayment for April. Review FS 1504-1 to determine if an overpayment exists for the Food Stamp program. Send appropriate notice.

NOTE: Even though the report is not timely, the report must be treated as if it were to establish which benefit months were overpaid. Allow for the expiration of the ten days from the date the change was known, and also allow ten days for worker action, as well as the ten-day timely notice of the adverse action. In the above example, if the report had been timely, it would have been submitted no later than March 11. There would have been ten days for the worker and still give timely notice of adverse action for April benefits.

- ▶ **EXAMPLE #4:** Carmen Amanda reports on April 27, on a signed HCS-260A, that she started working on April 18.

ACTION: Redetermine eligibility for June. Document action taken in TEAMS Case Notes (CANO). **No overpayment for May is calculated.**

NOTE: The household reported timely. The report is received after TEAMS Cutoff giving the Eligibility Case Manager no opportunity to recalculate and reauthorize May benefits.

This is no fault of the participant and no fault of the Eligibility Case Manager.

PROCEDURE
Eligibility Case
Manager:



ACTION:

1. Explain reporting requirement (send TEAMS notice X012) and provide Form HCS-260A Change Report Form to:
 - a. all applicants at initial interview, redetermination, and any time a change is not reported or not reported timely,
 - b. all households upon receipt of a change,
 - c. upon household's request, and
 - d. at every opportunity when communicating with the participant.
2. Report all changes specified as soon as possible but no later than 10 days of having knowledge of the change. This can be accomplished by completing Form HCS-260A, by phoning the local OPA or WoRC office, by reporting the change in writing to either OPA or WoRC, or reporting in person to either OPA or WoRC.
3. **Within 10 days of the reported/discovered change**, take appropriate action prior to TEAMS cutoff (issuance of benefits) to ensure that benefits are issued correctly and overpayments are avoided.
4. Send ADEQUATE notice if the participant reported the change on a signed Change Report Form (HCS-260A) and provided enough information to accurately determine ongoing eligibility. (See Section 1503-1 for exceptions to timely notice)

► **Participant:**

Eligibility Case
Manager:

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